



## **MENTORING COMMISSIONED OFFICERS**

### **Overview**

Mentoring within the Uniformed Services has always been important. Service members who understand the mission, history, advancement requirements, and cultures of their Service, officer category, and career track, feel more a part of their Service and organizational unit and, as a result, will be more positive and productive contributors to mission accomplishment. In the late 1990s, the PHS Mentoring Committee recommended that each Corps officer category develop and implement a mentoring program for their officers. To that end, the SciPAC developed and implemented a mentoring program and arranged its first generic training for mentoring commissioned officers in June of 1997.

Since 1997, the Scientist Category, through the efforts of the Chief Professional Officer and the SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee, has identified outstanding O-4, O-5 and O-6 officers to serve as mentors to newly commissioned officers and other officers who request such a relationship. The mentoring program is entirely voluntary.

### **What is Mentoring and Why is it Important?**

Mentoring is a relationship between a volunteer senior officer (mentor) and a junior officer (mentee). The role of the mentor is to inspire, encourage, and support the mentee, and to contribute to professional and personal development.

A mentoring relationship is important to both senior and junior officers because:

- Mentoring will help focus the mentee's career in a number of positive ways (e.g., understanding the need for and formulating an individualized career plan);
- A positive mentoring relationship will not only help the mentee prepare for promotion but also all the other career milestones of a successful career (e.g., finding billets of increasing responsibility and serving in leadership roles); and
- Mentoring is an expected professional role for both junior and senior officers and allows senior officers to show a clear evidence of leadership capability and investment in the mission of the Corps.

## **How Does the SciPAC Mentoring Program Work?**

### **Selection Process**

- **Mentee**: Every newly commissioned officer will soon become aware that he/she is more personally responsible for his/her career development than in other Services. Therefore, the SciPAC takes every opportunity to encourage each new officer to request a mentor as soon as possible after they enter on active duty.
- **Mentor**: Experienced O-4, O-5 and O-6 officers should be considered as potential mentors. Periodically new mentors will be solicited through SciPAC correspondence and other Corps media. Interested officers would be requested to contact the Mentoring Subcommittee Chair who will evaluate the need for new mentors with the background and skill of the interested senior officer and will collect further information that can be used to facilitate a good match with a mentee.

### **Matching Process**

Optimally, matching will use the best combination of important career criteria (e.g., discipline, anticipated career development track, agency, geographic location, prior service history, and other characteristics and interests) in putting together mentors and mentees. It should be anticipated that as a junior officer becomes more sophisticated about the Corps and his/her career options that a new mentor relationship might become necessary. Also, some mentors, especially more senior officers, will retire, necessitating a new relationship. Also, a junior officer should be encouraged to request a new mentor if the relationship is not meeting his/her professional needs. It is incumbent upon both mentors and mentees to alert the Mentoring Subcommittee Chairperson of any changes in the mentor/mentee relationship so that records can be updated.

### **Training and Guidelines for Mentors**

The Chief Scientist Officer, the SciPAC, and the Mentoring Subcommittee are responsible for ensuring that all mentors are adequately and broadly familiar with the Category career tracks and opportunities for career growth within Corps and the diverse agencies that it serves. SciPAC designated mentors should be viewed as positive role models and function accordingly. Both mentors and mentees should be proactive in establishing and maintaining the relationship. Frequent contact (at least quarterly) is essential for establishing initial rapport and keeping the lines of communication open. The mentorship agreement requests that mentors and mentees agree to a mentorship relationship for a period of one year, which can be extended.

A quick reference guide for mentors and mentees is available on the SciPAC website: [http://www.usphs-scientist.org/documents/activities\\_content/Mentoring\\_Quick\\_Reference\\_Page.pdf](http://www.usphs-scientist.org/documents/activities_content/Mentoring_Quick_Reference_Page.pdf)

## **Apply to Become a SciPAC Mentor or Mentee**

To apply to become a mentor or mentee, complete and submit the mentoring application form available on the SciPAC website:

[http://www.usphs-scientist.org/documents/careerdev\\_content/mentoringappl.pdf](http://www.usphs-scientist.org/documents/careerdev_content/mentoringappl.pdf)

This form should be returned to the current SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee Chair.